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Implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in response to General Assembly resolution 71/163. The report focuses on recent initiatives towards the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes by Member States, United Nations entities and civil society. The report aims to contribute to the systematic exchange of good practices in family policymaking.

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I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 71/163, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report at its seventy-third session, through the Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes by Member States and by agencies and bodies of the United Nations system.

2. In addition, the resolution called upon Member States and agencies and bodies of the United Nations system, in consultation with civil society and other relevant stakeholders, to continue providing information on their activities, including on good practices, in support of the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes, to be included in the report of the Secretary-General.

3. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/163, the Secretariat issued a note verbale to Member States and United Nations agencies and bodies to ascertain initiatives implemented in support of the objectives of the International Year and its follow-up processes. Responses were received from the Governments of Austria, Azerbaijan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Djibouti, El Salvador, Greece, Hungary, Jordan, Malta, Mozambique, Peru, the Philippines, the Russian Federation, Rwanda and Swaziland, as well as from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Food Programme (WFP). Country-level information presented in part two of the report is based on the responses from the Member States mentioned above.

4. The present report should be read in conjunction with the report on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes issued in July 2017 (A/72/166), which highlights the importance of family policies in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That report examines policies in the areas of the reduction of poverty and social exclusion, work-family balance and gender equality and the promotion of social integration and intergenerational solidarity.

II. Family policies and programmes in support of the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes at the national level

A. National frameworks and institutions for the design, implementation and monitoring of family policies and programmes

5. The strengthening of national institutions to formulate, implement and monitor family policies and respond to problems affecting families was one of the main objectives of the International Year of the Family, 1994. Some Member States have made efforts to strengthen existing institutions charged with the implementation of family policies. In some cases, such implementation was integrated into the work of several entities that dealt with gender, children, youth and older persons. Several governments also established new, long-term national plans or strategic policies to improve the well-being of families.

6. In Brunei Darussalam, the Special Committee on Women and Family Institution was established to better coordinate national efforts towards promoting and protecting the rights of women and the family. The Committee is composed of Permanent Secretaries of major Ministries and is tasked with recommending policies, legislation and plans of action on women and family issues. The Committee reviews and analyses such policies periodically and coordinates their

implementation by relevant agencies. It also ensures that gender and family perspectives are incorporated into all national policies and budgetary requirements.

7. In Malta, the Committee for the Strengthening of the Family, within the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity, advises the Government on appropriate measures to promote the well-being of families and acts as a forum on family-related matters. It studies the impact of legislation on the family and, where necessary, promotes new legislation to ensure the protection of the human rights of all family members. The Committee is also tasked with examining the effects of economic changes on families, and all social welfare and fiscal benefits and services, to ensure that they strengthen the family unit. The task of promoting and ensuring the integration of social and family policies at all levels of society has also been pursued by the Committee.

8. In Peru, a permanent multisectoral commission linked to several Ministries is tasked with the implementation of a national plan to strengthen families (*Plan Nacional de Fortalecimiento a las Familias, 2016–2021*). The plan promotes national, sectoral, intersectoral, intergovernmental and interinstitutional public management that recognizes the sociocultural diversity of families. It also aims to strengthen the capacity of family members to assume their responsibilities regarding education, socialization, care, economic support and protection.

9. In the Russian Federation, a strategy for national family policy for the period 2014–2025 focuses on expanding the role of the family in society and strengthening the role of parents, emphasizing traditional values. A coordination council, consisting of representatives of the executive and legislative branches and civil society, is tasked with the implementation of family policy in the country.

10. In Rwanda, institutions responsible for implementing various family policies include the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion, the National Women Council, the Gender Monitoring Office, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, as well as the Workforce Development Authority. The Rwandan Vision 2020 initiative and its mid-term implementation strategies place the family at the centre of development and highlight the protection of children and gender equality as prerequisites to achieving equitable and sustainable development for all.

B. Family policies to reduce poverty, hunger and social exclusion

11. Member States have enacted a number of family-oriented policies for poverty reduction in line with the main objective of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year: confronting family poverty and social exclusion. Recognizing the multidimensional aspects of poverty, the anti-poverty efforts often focus on education, health, employment, social security, livelihoods and social cohesion. Social security provisions, including child allowances for parents and pension benefits for older persons, feature prominently in poverty reduction efforts in many countries.

12. In Austria, a flat rate childcare allowance model is offered to those without employment or insurance, and public awareness of available family benefits is monitored to ensure that financial support is claimed by those in need.

13. The pension system in Chile is based on a "solidarity" pillar (accessed by persons who are not entitled to a pension in any pension scheme); a "voluntary" pillar (to facilitate, support and encourage non-compulsory old-age savings) and a "contributory" pillar (a mandatory contribution). The system also incorporates specific measures to address gender inequities resulting from the reduced participation of women in the labour market, their consequent lower income and

pension savings and their greater life expectancy. The reformed system also creates incentives for the recruitment of young people through a subsidy that promotes employability.

14. Also in Chile, a programme of psychosocial support (*Programa de Acompañamiento Psicosocial*) fosters the development of skills and capabilities promoting social inclusion and the autonomous development of families, while a programme of socio-occupational support (*Programa de Acompañamiento Sociolaboral*) aims to improve people's ability to generate income in an autonomous way, thereby improving their conditions of employability and participation in the workplace. Professionals work with the family and its members in both the social and workplace fields.

15. A national public policy to strengthen families (*Política Pública Nacional de Apoyo y Fortalecimiento a las Familias*) oversees several family-oriented programmes in Colombia. The More Families in Action programme (*Más Familias en Acción*) offers monetary incentives in education and health for vulnerable families with children, while its Income for Social Prosperity Programme (*Ingreso para la Prosperidad Social*) seeks to increase levels of education for heads of households in poverty. In addition, rural and indigenous families are targeted through specific programmes.

16. In Costa Rica, the Bridge to Development Strategy (*Estrategia Puente al Desarrollo*) addresses family poverty from a multisectoral and inter-institutional approach. It offers families access to the social protection system and capacity-building programmes linked to employment. Its socioeconomic strategy offers preferential access to employment for vulnerable family members.

17. In El Salvador, the National Plan for Development, Protection and Social Inclusion, 2014–2019 (*Plan Nacional de Desarrollo, Protección e Inclusión Social*) is the principal instrument guiding actions to reduce poverty in the country. It tackles multidimensional aspects of poverty of individuals and households in the areas of education, living conditions, housing, employment, social security, health, basic services and food security. Its new strategy for poverty eradication (*Estrategia para la Erradicación de la Pobreza*), approved in 2017, focuses on families with children under the age of 5, pregnant women, active students, persons with severe disabilities and persons over the age of 70.

18. Also in El Salvador, a programme for temporary income assistance (*Programa de Apoyo Temporal al Ingreso*) has been evaluated and improved. In addition to providing monetary transfers, the programme now ensures better school attendance and preventive health visits for children. It is currently accompanied by the *JóvenES con Todo* programme, which is focused on youth employment.

19. The support for low-income households in Greece includes measures to prevent children from abandoning their education, such as remedial teaching classes and education in their mother tongue. A project for the education of Roma children, putting emphasis on preschool and early enrolment in primary school, is being implemented by several universities. Psychosocial support and integration into the Greek education system is offered for refugee children.

20. The National Strategic Policy for Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion, 2014–2024, of Malta focuses on children, older persons, the unemployed and the working poor. It concentrates on several dimensions of well-being, such as income and benefits, employment, education, health and environment, social services and culture.

21. Also in Malta, the "LEAP Project" aims to help families leap out of poverty through a number of interventions contributing towards: (a) increasing the

participation of women in the labour market; (b) integrating, retaining and encouraging the progression of disadvantaged groups in the labour market while addressing labour market segmentation; and (c) using social welfare services to preserve and strengthen families undergoing difficult situations.

22. In Mozambique, social assistance in the form of basic social security programmes and housing benefits is offered to families in situations of poverty and vulnerability. The Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Action, through the National Institute of Social Action, implements programmes centred on the family, such as the Productive Social Action Programme, which seeks to promote the economic autonomy of beneficiaries by paying them to participate in the repair of access roads and in waste management at the community level.

23. In the Philippines, health and education cash grants are offered upon compliance with certain conditions. Families are required to send their children to school and bring them to health centres on a regular basis, and to avail themselves of pre- and postnatal care. Moreover, couples must regularly attend family development sessions.

24. Since 2007, the Family Capital Programme in the Russian Federation has offered financial incentives to families with two or more children. In 2017, a stipend of $8,200 was offered. The benefit can be used to improve living conditions and invest in education and can also be applied towards the pension savings of one of the parents. The amount of the grant is adjusted for inflation. In addition to federal programmes, regional programmes in the country provide nutrition and health subsidies for families with children.

25. In Swaziland, a review of national social protection policies and programmatic interventions for the most vulnerable populations is under way. Currently, the country provides grants for older persons, former members of the military and orphaned and vulnerable children. It also offers partial social assistance to persons with disabilities and those in extreme poverty.

C. Family policies to promote work-family balance and empowerment of women and girls

26. Full employment, decent work and ensuring work-family balance was the second major objective of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year. In many countries, new measures have been designed to promote reconciliation between family and working life, aiming to improve working conditions and facilitate more quality time between parents and their children.

27. Longer maternity, paternity and parental leave provisions, the option to work reduced hours and telecommuting have been introduced in several Member States. Some governments enacted new legislation to improve working conditions for workers with family responsibilities. The public sector has often been a pioneer in offering work-life balance measures for its employees.

28. In Austria, women wishing to go back to the labour market after a family-related career break can participate in a programme that matches skills with required competencies. Ministries and public universities are required to develop and publish action programmes to improve the position of women employees in terms of their salaries, work-family balance and the proportion of women in leadership positions. The gender gap in pay is addressed through an increased minimum wage and mandatory gender-specific wage improvements for companies with more than 150 employees. In every federal province, career centres for women provide gender-specific and individualized career advice. In addition, companies and municipalities

are audited to assess and improve their contribution to work-family balance. Efforts are also under way to support men in reconciling work and family, and to encourage them to take parental leave. Moreover, free and mandatory childcare of 20 hours per week is provided during the year prior to children starting school.

29. The labour code of Azerbaijan provides for labour rights for workers with family responsibilities. Such legislative measures are regularly revised and extended. For instance, the law on the termination of contracts has been amended and now prohibits the termination of employment contracts of workers who care for a family member under the age of 18 who has limited health capacity, or for a family member with a major disability. Another innovation is that a single parent or another family member who cares for a child under the age of 3 is eligible for partially paid social leave. Further measures aim to protect pregnant women in the workplace and introduce breastfeeding breaks.

30. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has updated its national action plan on women empowerment and gender equality. The plan has prioritized the empowerment of women in areas related to the economy, education, legal protection, health and decision-making, as well as green growth and climate change adaptation and mitigation. Discussions are under way to offer more vocational training opportunities for women, especially in scientific sectors. Similarly, more attention is being paid to specialized training for women civil servants.

31. Housing allowance for parents raising three or more children and State-supported housing savings programmes are offered in Hungary. Parents expecting their first child are eligible for a family tax benefit, an infant care benefit and a child home care benefit until the child reaches 2 years of age. The Government also provides a child-raising benefit for non-school-age children and schooling support for school-age children or older children who continue their studies in institutions of public education, up to the age of 23.

32. Hungary has also prioritized support to mothers re-entering the labour market. As a result, the current employment rate of women has grown from 50 to 60.2 per cent in the past 6 years and is at its highest rate in 20 years. There is also a part-time employment allowance offered to employers of parents returning from childcare leave, which promotes flexible forms of employment.

33. The new childcare system introduced in Hungary in 2017 is more flexible, differentiated, demand-driven and responsive to local needs. The system offers flexibility in line with the parents' work schedule and provides different options, such as nursery, mini-nursery, workplace nursery and family nursery. Moreover, the wages of qualified childcare educators have recently been raised, and a family-friendly workplace award has been introduced and is awarded annually to a company with outstanding family-friendly working conditions.

34. The Government of El Salvador is currently developing a policy of social co-responsibility for care (*Política de Corresponsabilidad Social de los Cuidados*) with a gender and rights perspective in order to recognize non-remunerated work in households and its implications for women's participation in the labour market.

35. In Chile, the child protection programme entitled "Chile Grows with You" (*Chile Crece Contigo*), recognizes the biological, physical, psychological and social dimensions of child development. The recently expanded programme supports children and their families by providing them with access to universal services. It also provides special support to vulnerable families in the areas of health and education and improvements in family, neighbourhood and community environments.

36. In Djibouti, new community nurseries have been established and family planning services have been strengthened. Family cohesion is promoted by the media, as is information on access to social services for women in rural areas.

37. Investments in nurseries and kindergartens have been made in Greece. Currently, full-day nurseries are available on a preferential basis for families with two working parents or with an unemployed parent; for vulnerable families, such as large households, those with a single parent or those with parents attending therapy programmes; and for immigrant families.

38. In Jordan, the National Council for Family Affairs has been implementing a project to establish and support nurseries and childcare centres in the private sector to encourage women to participate in the labour market. The project provides a flexible working environment for women and offers nurseries and childcare centres in the workplace. Caregivers are trained in early childhood education. The project aims at promoting the economic empowerment of women in the workplace and offers new job opportunities in the educational sector.

39. In Malta, paternity leave was recently extended and, since 2014, those who work or attend classes and have young children have had access to free childcare. Malta has put in place an "equality mark" award given to companies that foster gender equality in their work policies and practices by implementing measures that go beyond those required by legislation. Companies are assessed according to set criteria and provided with the necessary assistance to strengthen their commitments in that area.

40. Flexible working arrangements and telecommuting are expanding in the Russian Federation. Special training courses are also offered to help women returning from long-term parental leave improve their job qualifications in the competitive labour market.

41. In Mozambique, where women compose around 83 per cent of the small-scale family farming workforce, financing incentives for women entrepreneurs are promoted. For instance, to improve women's access to credit, the country has been implementing a strategy for the development of the financial sector for the period 2013–2022, which has resulted in better access to formal credit for women. Several rural development initiatives, such as training in nutritional education and support for rural traders, have been offered. A civil society initiative for a "women's bank" aims to serve and prioritize women's business in the country.

42. In Peru, legislation launching a set of technical criteria for institutional breastfeeding centres, with sanctions for cases of non-compliance, was introduced in 2016. Since 2010, the number of breastfeeding centres grew from zero to 927 in the private sector and from 161 to 330 in the public sector. Workplaces with more than 50 women of childbearing age must provide on-site childcare centres that can accommodate no fewer than 16 children.

43. The importance of work-family balance has been recognized in the revised national family policy in Rwanda. To operationalize the national early childhood development policy, the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion has developed a minimum service standard to ensure that all early childhood development service providers, including community-based organizations and the private sector, offer quality, equitable and accessible services to young children. The Ministry, through the Rwanda Women's Leaders Network, initiated a mentorship programme to provide support to young girls so that they can become future leaders and entrepreneurs. So far, the programme has been conducted in 17 public and private higher-learning institutions.

44. In Swaziland, family planning programmes that target both men and women have been strengthened, and legislation has been introduced to foster parental responsibility. An employee wellness coordinating committee has also been established to promote work-family balance, recognizing its role in achieving greater productivity and sustained economic growth.

D. Family policies to enhance social integration and intergenerational solidarity

45. Advancing social integration and intergenerational solidarity was a major objective of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year. In many countries, intergenerational initiatives focused on investing in children, young people and older persons in family contexts and on facilitating intergenerational exchanges.

46. In Austria, a mandatory youth-related impact assessment for all legislative projects has aimed to improve the social inclusion of youth and foster solidarity among generations. Mandatory education or vocational training is offered for young people under the age of 18 and for unemployed young adults without job qualifications under the age of 25. There is also a combination of coaching and specialized training for young people not in education, employment or training to acquire basic skills to improve employability.

47. In Cambodia, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been implementing a project called "Educating Children with Positive Attitude" in which relevant institutions promote parenting skills. Other intergenerational programmes for youth include educational spots by way of mass media that promote culture and traditions.

48. In El Salvador, the *Programa Nuestros Mayores Derechos* seeks to create a culture of inclusiveness in which older persons are autonomous and respected. The programme promotes healthy ageing and stronger citizenship. A universal basic pension is offered to persons over the age of 70 who live in extreme poverty. The *Comunidades Solidarias Rurales* programme and the *Comunidades Solidarias Urbanas* programme provide basic universal pensions for older persons, and intergenerational exchanges are promoted by the Salvadoran Institute of Integral Rehabilitation.

49. In Greece, pension reforms have been undertaken to ensure the pension system's sustainability by decreasing current pension entitlements. Several programmes for older persons have been offered, such as housing allowances, daytime care centres for older adults and social solidarity benefits for uninsured older persons, while the Aid at Domicile programme provides nursing and social care services to older persons who live alone and for persons with disabilities. The programmes support independent living at the person's place of residence and are mostly implemented by municipalities. Efforts have also been made to improve the labour market integration of youth in an effort to combat the high youth unemployment rate.

50. The Hungarian pension system fosters intergenerational solidarity and reduces inequality, reallocating resources between the young and old generations. Both formal employment and childcare activities count towards pension entitlements. In addition, grandparents receive financial incentives to care for their grandchildren.

51. The Government of Hungary supports civil society and private sector initiatives such as a "senior-friendly municipality" award given to local authorities who promote collaboration between generations. Retired individuals participate in senior training forums, which offer free computer and foreign language classes.

Other initiatives include leisure, educational and cultural activities that promote interaction between generations.

52. The National Council for Family Affairs of Jordan, in cooperation with a national committee to follow up on the implementation of the National Strategy for Older Persons, has been updating its National Strategy for Older Persons through case reviews and nationwide discussions. The strategy aims at improving the quality of life of older persons and at boosting their self-confidence and abilities. It also promotes family ties and strengthens communication and dialogue between generations.

53. In Mozambique, public information lectures and debates aim at disseminating information about the rights of older persons. A law on the promotion and protection of the rights of older persons was promulgated in the country in 2014. A second national plan for older persons for the period 2015–2019, aiming to improve the well-being of older persons, is currently being implemented.

54. The Fatherhood Platform Peru (*Plataforma de Paternidades Perú*) was formed in 2015 within the context of the MenCare campaign to promote responsible fatherhood in Latin America. It seeks to encourage men to participate in caring for their children, and is composed of organizations and institutions of government, civil society and companies that are willing to promote equitable gender relations by fostering the participation of men in childcare.

55. The Department of Gender and Family Issues in Swaziland coordinates gender- and family-related matters in the country, emphasizing that social cohesion is learned in the family through reciprocal caring. Communities play a similar role, caring for the well-being of families in larger settings. The Government also recognizes the importance of grandparents, who, in extended families, often raise their grandchildren.

56. In the Philippines, conditional cash transfers for families require parents to attend family development sessions that aim at enhancing parental knowledge and skills. Sessions are held monthly and cover various child development issues.

57. In Rwanda, the Let's Raise Children in Families programme (*Tuharere Mu Muryango*) was designed to help in the implementation of the country's Strategy for National Child Care Reform to contribute to a better child protection system. Its overall goal is to create a national alternative care system where children are returned from residential institutions to family and community care. A network of professional social workers and psychologists has been established across the country to implement the programme. Similarly, the country's campaign to promote positive parenting for the period 2014–2018 prioritizes children's best interests, helping them grow in an environment that is free from violence and conducive to their healthy development.

58. In Malta, the National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing, 2014–2020, focuses on strategies to ensure a more physically and cognitively active lifestyle to residents in Government-run homes. The country's daytime care centres for the elderly have been transformed into centres for active ageing and lifelong learning.

E. Promoting family-related research and awareness-raising activities at national and regional levels

59. Promoting knowledge of the economic, social and demographic processes affecting families and their members, with attention to the rights and responsibilities

of all family members, formed part of the objectives of the International Year. Several Member States and regional entities supported initiatives in that area.

60. In Brunei Darussalam, the Special Committee on Women and Family Institution commissions research to identify challenges and recommend strategies to address them. National Family Day is celebrated annually nationwide to instil greater awareness of the importance of the institution of the family for a harmonious society.

61. The Colombian Family Welfare Institute (*Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar*) has been developing new methodologies to effectively carry out programmes promoting mutual and reciprocal care, intergenerational solidarity, work-family balance, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Through its school for families and rural communities programme (*Escuela para Familias y Comunidades Rurales*), educational programmes for families on, inter alia, a culture of peace, intergenerational cooperation and citizenship, as well as on healthy habits and responsible sexuality, have been offered.

62. The national statistical office of Malta regularly publishes news releases and statistical reports on areas related to the family, including annual demographic reviews, statistics on living conditions and culture, population and social conditions statistics, such as its census on population and housing, and labour market statistics, including quarterly labour force surveys.

63. Moreover, the Department of Family Studies at the University of Malta has acted as an inter-faculty institution to develop a body of knowledge on family-related matters. The Department promotes research on all aspects of family life and offers certificate, degree and postgraduate courses in family studies. It also organizes multidisciplinary workshops, seminars and conferences on family issues, works with other family study centres and organizations, serves as a resource centre and offers consultative services to governmental and non-governmental institutions assisting families.

64. Various awareness-raising initiatives on family-related matters have been carried out in Malta. Some addressed domestic violence, positive parenting and combating discrimination and abuse. Awareness-raising campaigns on positive parenting, dementia and combating cyberbullying have been carried out with the support of the Ministry for the Family, Children's Rights and Social Solidarity.

65. To support traditional family values, the Russian Federation established a national day of family, love and faith. Moreover, the Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States established 2017 as the Year of the Family.

66. In Rwanda, a month-long family campaign has been organized on an annual basis since 2011. It includes activities to sensitize the community with regard to taking action against problems faced by the Rwandan family and to promote sociocultural values that strengthen family ties and solidarity. Awareness campaigns also focus on how women can benefit from economic opportunities and how vulnerable families are supported through mutual support and friendship programmes.

67. Supported by the European Union, the large-scale Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development included a project entitled "FamiliesAndSocieties", aiming to investigate family diversity, assess the compatibility of policies with family changes in Europe and enhance evidence-based policy-making, on the basis of the joint efforts over a four-year period of 25 research organizations from 15 European countries and 3 transnational civil society actors, as well as 80 national and international stakeholder organizations. The outcomes presented at the project website in the form of working papers,

publications, new databases and policy briefs, as well as the published policy recommendations report, extend knowledge with regard to how policies promote well-being, inclusion and sustainable societal development among families in various contexts. By making the results publicly available and identifying the key findings and related policy recommendations, the project assists policymakers in designing policies to successfully cope with societal challenges related to the recurring nature of vulnerability in societies and across generations.[1]

III. Family policies and programmes in support of the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes at the international level

A. General Assembly

68. During the discussions of the Third Committee at the seventy-second session of the General Assembly, Member States noted the recent progress in the development and implementation of family policy. Many delegations noted the link between family policies and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

69. The Group of 77 affirmed the importance of the International Year of the Family follow-up process and urged Member States to continue efforts to develop family policy, especially in the areas of family poverty, social exclusion, violence prevention, work-family balance and the promotion of intergenerational solidarity.

70. The Group of African States noted the continued relevance of the plan of action on the African family and emphasized that family remained an important nucleus for the protection of its vulnerable members and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The Group asserted that more attention should be given to the family at the United Nations.

71. The role of families in social inclusion and integration was acknowledged by several Member States, and they noted that family was indispensable for the social inclusion of all individuals, especially youth, persons with disabilities and older persons. Member States also emphasized the role of families in educating and socializing children, which contributes to human capital formation, bearing in mind that different forms of the family exist in different political, social and cultural systems.

72. Recognizing families as agents of development, governments noted their investments in family policies that supported that role and allowed families to develop their social and cultural capacities. Conditional cash transfers for families that required school attendance and health visits, and sometimes family development courses, featured prominently in the efforts of Member States to reduce poverty.

73. The European Union noted the importance of achieving work-family balance, the sharing of family responsibilities between men and women and reducing the gender pay gap.

[1] See www.familiesandsocieties.eu.

B. Commission for Social Development

74. At the discussions during the fifty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development, held from 1 to 10 February 2017, the Group of African States noted the critical role of the family in cultural, political and socioeconomic development and emphasized the importance of concrete efforts to improve the well-being of family in the areas of poverty reduction, work-family balance and intergenerational solidarity.

75. Qatar reiterated that family-oriented policies and programmes were important tools to fight poverty, social exclusion and inequality, promote work-family balance, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls, and advance social integration and intergenerational solidarity to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

76. With regard to their efforts to eradicate poverty, several delegates noted their conditional (or unconditional) cash transfers to vulnerable individuals and families. The recently updated family grant programme (*Bolsa Familia*) in Brazil complements the income of more than 50 million families in the country. Households in Brazil are also supported in their efforts to promote early childhood development through access to health and education. The country's new national strategy for social and productive inclusion is intended to promote work- and income-generating activities. Its registry for social policies allows for the maintenance of 20 social programmes that include the areas of housing, access to electricity and sanitation and combating child labour.

77. In Paraguay, conditional cash transfers are provided to households living in poverty, 70 per cent of which are headed by women. Other programmes supporting families, including indigenous families, aim at developing the productive capacities of family members to overcome poverty. Sweden invests in family policies that focus on supporting early childhood care and education, which it considers the most efficient way to fight poverty. Thailand established a child support scheme for vulnerable families which recently benefited 190,000 children. In 2016, Poland introduced a programme entitled "Rodzina 500 Plus", which offers monetary transfers for families with two or more children to increase the economic stability of households and respond to demographic challenges. Assistance to households headed by women is offered in the Islamic Republic of Iran, while in Malawi conditional cash transfers for vulnerable households aim to reduce poverty, improve nutrition and encourage the enrolment of children in school. Productive safety nets in Zimbabwe provide employment in community infrastructure projects for vulnerable households, complementing cash transfers.

78. Indonesia invests in family stability, and among its social protection schemes is the "Prosperous Family Card", which offers access to free health and education services for children as well as conditional cash transfers to purchase school supplies and other necessities. Austria noted that, without family support provisions, poverty in the country would increase by 4 per cent.

79. Several Member States noted their initiatives in support of work-family balance. The Companies for Families network in Austria includes enterprises that create family-friendly conditions in the workplace and consider it a competitive business advantage. To promote gender equality, the Government increased its budget for childcare facilities and now offers a bonus for fathers who avail themselves of paternity leave.

80. In Europe, investments have been made with regard to parental leave, reconciling family and work life and preventing domestic violence. Family policies

in Cuba focus on women with children and aim mainly at better reconciliation of work and family obligations and the prevention of violence.

81. Several Member States noted new initiatives in support of intergenerational solidarity. Solidarity payments in Portugal promote intergenerational solidarity. Family development sessions promoting healthy family relations are offered in the Philippines. The Happy Child Programme (*Programa Criança Feliz*) in Brazil is a multidisciplinary approach for children that focuses on early childhood development. The Republic of Korea provides services intended to strengthen the resilience of all types of families, including professional counselling, parental education and tailored services for different types of families, such as families headed by a single person and adolescent families. To ensure balanced population growth, China is now promoting a policy of allowing two children per couple.

82. In terms of national family policy development and family law reforms, Kenya has implemented new legal initiatives on maternity and paternity leaves, housing benefits, social protection and family law reforms, including protection from domestic violence, while a draft family policy is being developed in consultation with stakeholders in Botswana. Qatar introduced legislation to uphold the human rights of all family members and enable the family to fully contribute to development. Brazil noted that it did not recognize the family unit as a rights holder because it considered the individual members of the family unit to be human rights holders. Brazil and the Republic of Korea emphasized their recognition of different family types, while Colombia noted the need to discuss issues concerning different forms of the family at the forum of the Commission.

83. Concerning the exchange of good practices at the regional level, the European Platform for Investing in Children focuses on child and family policy evaluation and the exchange of good practices.

84. In addition to the main meetings, many parallel events of the Commission for Social Development focused on several aspects of family policy. The briefing "Leaving no child behind: promoting youth inclusion through quality education for all", organized by the International Federation for Family Development in cooperation with the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations, promoted the importance of quality child education for responsible citizenship. It highlighted the positive impacts of early childhood education on later success in life.

85. The Doha International Family Institute, supported by the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the United Nations, organized a panel discussion entitled "Fighting poverty: a case for investing in family-oriented policies and programmes". The experts provided insights on the systematic mainstreaming of a family perspective in achieving Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 1 on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. The event also shared Arab regional perspectives and data on poverty and social protection.[7]

86. Make Mothers Matter organized an event entitled "Early parenting and early childhood care and education to address the intergenerational dimension of poverty: the CEPPs Global Initiative", an initiative to promote the Childhood and Early Parenting Principles. The event focused on early parenting and early childhood care, and noted the critical stage in child development between birth and 3 years of age. The event emphasized that a focus on early childhood development brought high rates of return throughout a person's entire life, and had the transformative potential to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and bring about more peaceful

[7] See www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wp-content/uploads/sites/22/2017/01/Invitation-DIFI-Side-Event.pdf.

societies. Early childhood education programmes focusing on adequate health and nutrition, safety, protection and education could help achieve such goals.[3]

C. United Nations system initiatives

87. In its response to the note verbale sent by the Secretariat pursuant to General Assembly resolution 71/163, WFP noted the importance of promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding as a family-oriented policy and a critical measure in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2. With regard to its mission to eliminate hunger by 2030, WFP recognized that optimal breastfeeding could save the lives of an estimated 823,000 children under the age of 5 every year. Through its programming and partnerships, WFP continued to strive to reach global targets to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition, including the target to increase the current rate of exclusive breastfeeding in the first six months from 38 per cent to at least 50 per cent of all infants.

88. UNESCO, in its response to the note verbale sent by the Secretariat, emphasized that the social setting of families was essential to improving education and enabling sustainable development. The achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5 required the engagement of individuals, communities, institutions and societies. The sociocultural contexts of families and the socialization processes within them played a critical role in influencing access to early play and educational opportunities throughout their lives, and in supporting the learning process.

89. The UNESCO publication entitled *Cracking the Code: Girls' and Women's Education in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)* demonstrates that the attitudes of girls towards science and technology are strongly influenced by their immediate family environment. Parental expectations play a major role in shaping the attitudes of girls and their interest in STEM studies. Parents have a strong influence over the career choices of their children through the home environment, experiences and support they provide. Engaging parents, as the primary caretakers of children, and the wider family is critical to opening doors to STEM studies and careers for girls.[4]

90. In terms of policies supporting work-family balance, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) suggests putting in place flexible family/care leaves with high income replacement in countries with formal labour markets and family/child allowances that encourage men to share responsibility for care in all countries. Another recommended measure is to invest in affordable and quality care services and to create "high road" strategies in the care sector through appropriate government regulations, adequate public funding and strategies that build on the common interests of care workers and care users.[5]

91. The importance of reducing the gender pay gap has been emphasized by the International Labour Organization (ILO). ILO asserts that social policies have an impact on the career choices of women and can facilitate opportunities for women to combine work and family responsibilities through flexible work arrangements and/or childcare. Policy may also moderate the gender division of labour with respect to care roles and influence the supply of labour and the value of time spent

[3] See https://cepprinciples.org/news-events.

[4] See http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0025/002534/253479E.pdf.

[5] See UN-Women, "Redistributing unpaid care and sustaining quality care services: a prerequisite for gender equality". Available from http://socialprotection-humanrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/Brief-5_Redistributing-Unpaid-Care-and-Sustaining-Quality-Care-Services.pdf.

in unpaid care work. Therefore, social policies, such as parental leave, childcare, rights to flexible work arrangements and compensation in social protection for unpaid care work, have a direct impact on the motherhood pay gap.[6]

92. The nature of the social policy support in any given country has implications for the costs to women of becoming mothers and for the distribution of those costs by social class, educational level and labour market position. Thus, there should be infrastructure, affordable care services, respect and the time and financial resources (through regulated work hours, decent wages, paid leave, child and family allowances and care credits in pensions) to at least temporarily withdraw from paid work. Finally, to make unpaid care visible and to monitor the impact of policies and investments, national statistical offices should produce time-use surveys at regular intervals.[6]

93. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, through its Division for Social Policy and Development, has continued its efforts to demonstrate and document the importance of a variety of family policies for the advancement of several Sustainable Development Goals and targets.

94. In 2017, focus was placed on the role of families in achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4, to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. The 2017 observance of the International Day of Families, on the theme "Families, education and well-being", was organized in cooperation with the Outreach Division of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. The observance raised awareness of the vital role that families play in the educational attainment of their children. The panellists representing the United Nations Children's Fund, civil society, academia and the media emphasized the importance of early childhood education and the role of parents and caregivers in stimulating children's brain development.[7]

95. Several noteworthy side events of the fifty-fifth session of the Commission for Social Development were organized by the Division for Social Policy and Development, in cooperation with civil society. Some events were sponsored by interested Member States.

96. A panel discussion, organized in partnership with the International Federation for Family Development, focused on the topic "Inclusive cities and sustainable families" and emphasized the importance of creating family-friendly cities that would fulfil the needs of all generations. The event raised awareness of the challenges in a rapidly urbanizing world that can be addressed through an intergenerational lens.[8]

97. Another event, organized by the Permanent Missions of Argentina and Austria to the United Nations, in cooperation with the Division for Social Policy and Development, focused on the topic "Promoting intergenerational relations: age diversity and its effects on youth policy development". The event recognized the pivotal role of healthy intergenerational relations in societies, which are promoted by adequate policies focusing on youth development and intergenerational justice, addressing structural changes in the job market, securing pensions and care for older persons, and related issues.[9]

[6] ILO, *Closing the Gender Pay Gap: A Review of the Issues, Policy Mechanisms and International Evidence* (Geneva, 2016). Available from www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_540889.pdf.

[7] See www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-days-of-families/idf2017.html.

[8] See www.familyperspective.org/vid/vid-0173-en.php.

[9] See www.berndmatrin.eu/en/55th-session-of-the-commission-for-social-development-in-ny-2.

D. Civil society initiatives

98. Many civil society organizations undertook initiatives at national and regional levels, contributing to the implementation of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year. During its recent advocacy efforts, COFACE Families Europe (formerly the Confederation of Family Organizations in the European Union) presented its vision for the reconciliation of economy and society and its assertion that families need resources, services and time. COFACE Families Europe advocates for better legislation in line with the proposed work-life balance directive of the European Union.[10] In addition, COFACE Families Europe launched a survey of family carers across 16 countries in commemoration of the International Day of Families, 15 May,[11] while its conference entitled "Families on the move" highlighted the plight of migrant families.[12]

99. The Walmart Centre for Family and Corporate Conciliation at the IAE Business School in Argentina organized several awareness-raising events with the participation of the Division for Social Policy and Development. They focused on various aspects of work-family balance and the recognition of unpaid work at home.

100. The Global Home Index,[13] an initiative of the Home Renaissance Foundation with academic support from the Walmart Centre for Family and Corporate Conciliation and from the Culture, Work and Care Research Centre at the INALDE Business School in Colombia, is a comparative study conducted in 20 countries. The study evaluates how home-based work is valued and how it contributes to human development. The study recommends the promotion of education and communication strategies as well as new legislation that recognizes that family tasks are a matter of shared societal responsibility.[14]

101. The Walmart Centre for Family and Corporate Conciliation issued the fourth edition of its guide of good practices on work-family balance, entitled *Towards a Shared Responsibility: Family, Corporation and Society* (*Hacia una Responsabilidad Compartida: Familia, Empresa y Sociedad*). The guide provides innovative examples of good practices and ways to involve community activists, trade unions and the public in advancing work-family balance in order to contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals.[15]

102. The Consortium of Institutes on Family in the Asian Region and the Family Council of Hong Kong, China, organized the Exchange Programme on the Wofoo Asian Award for Advancing Family Well-being, held in Hong Kong on 16 and 17 June 2017. Scholars, social workers, medical professionals, family practitioners and students from a range of academic, government, civil society and private organizations participated. The teams of finalists presented their projects, and were joined by the award-winning teams of 2014 to share information on the progress made since then. The projects focused on, inter alia, youth outreach through information and communications technologies, the parents of children with developmental disabilities, the situation of excessive gaming among young people,

[10] See COFACE Families Europe, "Families on the edge: Building a comprehensive European work-life balance reality". Available from www.coface-eu.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/COFACE-paper_Families-on-the-edge_v4.pdf.

[11] See www.coface-eu.org/disability/study-family-carers. The results of the study are to be presented in the European Parliament on 30 November 2017 (see www.coface-eu.org/disability/study-who-cares-in-europe).

[12] See www.coface-eu.org/consumers/families-on-the-move.

[13] See www.globalhomeindex.org/eng/index.html.

[14] The results of the survey are available from www.globalhomeindex.org/informes/english/primer_informe/index.html.

[15] See www.iae.edu.ar/es/Landings/Confye/flipbook2017/index.html.

mothers with substance abuse problems, cancer patients and their families, intergenerational engagement and parents with children who have behavioural difficulties.[16]

103. In Nigeria, the Institute for Work and Family Integration, in partnership with the International Federation for Family Development and the Nigerian Association for Family Development, as well as the Federal Ministries of Education and of Women Affairs and Social Development, hosted an international conference on the family and sustainable development, focusing on achieving inclusive and quality education for all. The event emphasized that education was a fundamental human right, indispensable to sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

104. The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family continues to raise awareness of challenges faced by families and focuses on sharing good practices and innovative solutions at the national and community level. Recently, the Committee has focused on a number of issues relating to Sustainable Development Goal 4, including parenting interventions, adolescent well-being and engaging families in literacy and learning.[17]

105. The NGO Committee on the Family-New York, part of the Conference of Non-governmental Committees, organizes awareness-raising events on various family issues. The recent topics under discussion included parental rights and responsibilities, the importance of fathers in the family, the well-being of children and the impact of migration on family structure and functioning. To mark the International Day of Families, the Committee organized a round table discussion on the role of parents in helping their children thrive.[18]

IV. Conclusions

106. The initiatives at the national level presented in the report demonstrate that Member States have made progress in their efforts to develop and implement family-oriented policies and programmes in line with the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes.

107. Many Member States acknowledge that the cross-sectoral nature of family policies requires that their development and implementation should be integrated into overall social policymaking. To achieve that, a strong institutional framework is indispensable. Accordingly, some Member States followed or introduced new national family-oriented strategies, policies and programmes to be implemented by national family policy institutions or integrated into the work of several entities, depending on national priorities.

108. Many Member States have expanded family policies in the areas of poverty reduction, work-family balance and social integration and intergenerational solidarity, as recommended by the framework of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year, and consider them useful for the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals, namely Goals 1 to 5.

109. Conditional and universal cash transfers, often combined with child benefits, continue to form an important part of efforts to reduce poverty in many parts of the world and have been credited with an overall reduction in poverty rates and improved health and education outcomes for children.

[16] See www.cifa-net.org/content.aspx?urlkey=6rkVkmV5tsE1eOsO.
[17] See www.viennafamilycommittee.org.
[18] See www.ngofamilyny.org.

110. Improving work-family balance for families is high on the agenda of many countries. In some countries, more flexible working arrangements have been offered, including options to telecommute or work part-time. Paternity leave is also gaining more ground, as is the promotion of involved fatherhood. Nevertheless, paternity leave is mostly very short and not adequately addressed.

111. There is a growing recognition that policies and programmes to ensure work-family balance contribute to gender equality. They help empower women and increase their participation in the labour market, and contribute to the more equitable distribution of household responsibilities between men and women. Consequently, new flexible working arrangements have been gaining ground, especially in the public sector, and some positive evaluations indicate links between innovative working arrangements, such as telecommuting, and gains in productivity in the workplace.

112. Rapid demographic changes, including ageing and decreased fertility in some parts of the world, oblige governments to review their family policies and invest in intergenerational policies and programmes. Such initiatives include investing in intergenerational facilities and supporting interactions among generations. In that context, some Member States have also invested in parenting education to improve the well-being of children. More evaluations are needed to ascertain the long-term impact and effectiveness of such programmes.

113. Further advancement of family policy in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development depends on how well issues of family policy are integrated into the overall development planning at national levels.

114. The effectiveness of family policies and programmes depends on their regular assessment. That is where qualitative and quantitative research on family structures, needs, challenges and changing intergenerational relations are needed. Such research needs to focus on emerging trends and evaluate the impact of implemented policy measures on families. In that context, family impact assessment studies, which seek to assess the impact of particular socioeconomic policies on families, are important. They have the potential to ensure that new policies effectively respond to the numerous challenges faced by families in a changing world.

V. Recommendations

115. **Member States are encouraged to consider the following recommendations:**

(a) **Continue their efforts to implement the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes;**

(b) **Continue their efforts in the implementation of the objectives of the twentieth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in the areas of poverty, work-family balance and intergenerational issues;**

(c) **Further recognize that family-oriented policies and programmes are integral to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, particularly in support of ending poverty and hunger, promoting well-being for all at all ages, promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all and achieving gender equality;**

(d) **Strengthen cooperation with civil society, academic institutions and the private sector in the implementation of relevant family policies and programmes;**

(e) Support family research and impact assessment studies to effectively respond to challenges faced by families;

(f) Continue the sharing of good practices in family policymaking at national, regional and international levels.